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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM Take Two

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SUBJECT Arnaud de Borchgrave

DON WALKER: Nicaragua and the news media, as we've seen in the past few days, both the United States and Nicaragua apparently using the news media to rally support, and even set a sort of tone of policy.

LOIS HART: Intelligence analyst Arnaud de Borchgrave is a former Newsweek foreign correspondent and is familiar with the manipulation of the news media.

WALKER: His book The Spike fictionalized the Soviet skulduggery of the Western press.

The U.S. and Soviet Union are spending millions of dollars to promote their own special interests and influence public opinion. If you can -- you know, we've been hearing about comparisons of Nicaragua with Cuba by the United States, Nicaragua saying we're going to invade. Is this sort of a manipulation of the news media going on here?

ARNAUD DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, Professor Robert S. Laken, who is the Carnegie Endowment scholar who wrote the democratic alternative, so-called, to the bipartisan Kissinger Report on Central America last January, is also the man who wrote the October 8th cover story for the New Republic, which was a total repudiation of his previously held pro-Sandinista views, yet another victim of Nicaraguan disinformation and Cuban disinformation.

And Lincoln, incidentally, comes down very hard on the U.S. press corps covering Nicaragua, saying that they've been taken in, in effect co-opted by the Sandinistas. He said that he had run into disaffected Sandinista intellectuals who poured

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their hearts out to him and said they were actually afraid to talk to American reporters covering Nicaragua because they knew that they sympathized with the Sandinistas.

LOIS HART: So you would say the Soviet Union is winning this one, at least in the media?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, we have two other Democrats, both scholars, Professor Richard Schultz and Roy Godson of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in Georgetown, who wrote a book called Disinformasia, which is the Russian word for disinformation, the first scholarly work on the subject. It came out five months ago in Washington. And if anything, they have demonstrated how we, in The Spike, understated the problem.

WALKER: At the same time, though, you know, we heard those first accounts that the Soviets were shipping sophisticated jet fighters, MiGs, to Nicaragua. Now we're told that, apparently, that is not the case.

Is this a case of the United States with a bit of disinformation?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, they were crates that were watched, as you know, in the Black Sea when they were being loaded. These are crates that have carried MiGs in the past. There's a whole science at the CIA called cratology. They know exactly how large these crates are, what they contain, from previous experience. Shipping MiGs, for instance, to Ethiopia or Mozambique or Angola. They've had a lot of experience in this field. And what these crates contain, we still don't know. They could easily be off-loaded in Peru, for instance, because Peru is now going through a rather large buildup of Soviet military hardware. Interestingly enough, the American media has paid no attention to this. Peru today has 150 Soviet military advisers, which is more than the United States has in all of South America, excluding Central America.

WALKER: Let me ask you about the Soviet bomber flyovers in Japan. Is this in any way linked to what is going on in Nicaragua, with our spy plane flights flying over Nicaragua?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, it could be. I have no idea what's going through their minds. But the Soviet Union, as you know, is now faced with the growing phenomenon of anti-Communist national liberation fronts, in Cambodia, in Afghanistan, in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua. This is a spreading phenomenon, and they clearly are on the defensive. And what they are trying to demonstrate, obviously, is that they are still a global military power, and there are a variety of ways of doing this. But they are very much on the defensive.

First of all, how are they on the defensive?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, they're on the defensive because of the phenomenon that I just mentioned. You know, for 30 years we have been going through pro-Marxist national liberation fronts. You now have 250,000 men and women under arms in about six different countries participating in anti-Communist guerrilla movements.

HART: Mr. De Borchgrave, on the subject of the U.S. trying to win over the Nicaraguans, it's been reported in the press that there is some squabbling going on among the various agencies and that the news media are being used to promote these various points of view. This is nothing new. I guess this goes on all the time.

Do you know which agencies are lobbying for which strategy?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, clearly, the Administration would like to see aid to the Contras resumed. If you read Dr. Laken's October 8th cover story in the New Republic, he says the Contras are not some sort of Mickey Mouse operation run by the CIA. Quite the contrary. He says they are widely popular. They are referred to locally, and admiringly, as Los Muchachos, The Boys; and that the regime is widely despised. And Mr. Laken has made six different trips to Nicaragua, and he went all over the country. And he was astonished to discover how popular the Contras were.

Now, as you know, the \$21 million requested by the Administration to fund the Contras for another year has been turned down by the House, and the second Reagan Administration is very anxious to see this aid restored.

HART: Getting back to the subject of using the news media, the State Department says, Alan Romberg says that there are all kinds of leaks going on. Is this the Administration at work here with these leaks?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Well, I think that leaks have been going on ever since government existed in Washington. I've been a newspaper man for 38 years, and I think most of us made our reputations through leaks. So that's nothing new.

WALKER: On the comparison of Nicaragua to Cuba, would it be your conclusion that the United States press, anyway, news media, is being misled, as it apparently was just before the Cuban takeover by Fidel Castro?

DE BORCHGRAVE: Oh, absolutely. I've seen this happen

over and over again because among younger colleagues there's this romantic predisposition toward Marxist-led guerrilla movements in the Third World. And Castro still enjoys a rather romantic image in the Western media as the bearded revolutionary leader, still in his combat fatigues after 25 years of revolution.

So, if you read Shirley Christian -- and she actually won the Pulitzer Prize for her 1981 reporting in Latin America for the Miami Herald -- she wrote a devastating indictment in the Washington Journalism Review in March of '82 in which she explained that the American press covering the Nicaraguan revolution against the Somoza dictatorship deliberately played down the Marxist aspects of that movement, all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding.

HART: Okay. Arnaud de Borchgrave, thank you very much for being with us today.